

## **COMBINED HORMONAL CONTRACEPTIVES CLIENT EDUCATION**

Combined Hormonal Contraceptives (CHC) contain the hormones estrogen and progesterone, similar to hormones produced by a woman's body. They primarily work to prevent pregnancy by keeping eggs from being released by the ovaries. You should not take CHC's if you have reason to think you might be pregnant.

Before you start taking CHCs, be sure you understand both the benefits and the possible problems of using them. This information sheet also lists the danger signs you should watch for. If you have any questions as you read, we will be happy to talk about them with you.

You will receive written information explaining the use, effectiveness, and medically recognized benefits and risks of the available birth control methods and devices. You should read the package insert or the CHC fact sheet and ask questions about anything you do not understand.

In addition to its value as a method of birth control, most women will have the following benefits from using a CHC:

- Predictable, regular menstrual cycles;
- Decreased menstrual cramps and blood loss;
- Less iron deficiency anemia;
- Less acne;
- Some protection from non-cancerous breast tumors and ovarian cysts;
- Some protection from ovarian and uterine lining cancer;
- Decreased risk of infection of the pelvis (PID);
- Fewer ectopic pregnancies.

There may be less protection from pregnancy when CHCs are taken with certain drugs, especially those used to control seizures. You should talk to your clinician about what to do if you take any other medicine with CHCs. If you see a health care provider for any reason, you should tell them you are taking a CHC.

CHC users have a slightly greater chance than non-users of developing certain serious problems that may cause death in rare cases including:

- Blood clots in the legs that can travel to the lungs
- Stroke
- Heart attack
- Liver tumors

You should **NOT** use any CHC if you have had, now have, or develop in the future any of the following:

- Blood clots in the veins or arteries
- Serious liver disease
- A heart attack or stroke
- Cancer of the breast
- Headaches with numbness or weakness in the arms or legs
- Headaches with vision problems or feeling as if the room is spinning

- Multiple cardiovascular risk factors (tobacco use, diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol)
- Valvular heart disease with complications
- Known blood clotting conditions
- Jaundice with prior hormonal contraceptive use or with pregnancy
- Prolonged immobilization due to recent/anticipated surgery or illness
- Known or suspected pregnancy
- Gallbladder disease (currently symptomatic or medically treated)
- Systemic lupus
- History of bariatric surgery-malabsorptive procedure (pill only)
- Less than 21 days post-partum delivery (breastfeeding or not breastfeeding)
- Less than 21-42 days (breastfeeding or not breastfeeding) with risk factors for blood clots (age  $\geq$  35 years, previous VTE, thrombophilia, immobility, transfusion at delivery, BMI 30 or >, post-partum hemorrhage, post cesarean delivery, preeclampsia, or smoker)
- Smoking and age 35 and over
- Cardiac disease related to pregnancy (before or after)
- Organ transplant

Minor reactions to CHCs may include:

- Nausea, vomiting, headache
- Breast tenderness
- Weight gain or loss
- Spotting between periods
- Skin irritation (Patch only)
- Increased vaginal discharge (Ring only)

You should watch for the following danger signals and report any to a clinician

**immediately:**

- Sharp or crushing chest pain or coughing blood
- Shortness of breath
- Unusual swelling or pain in the legs or arms
- Sudden severe headaches
- Changes in the frequency, severity, or associated symptoms of your headache
- Eye problems such as loss of vision
- Severe pain in the stomach or abdomen
- Yellowing of the skin or eyes
- Severe depression
- Unusually heavy bleeding from the vagina
- New lump in your breast
- No period after having a period every month

Some other things to be aware of:

- Using a CHC does not protect against sexually transmitted infections/HIV and a serious infection could cause sterility. If you or your partner has other sexual partners, you should use latex condoms to prevent infections.